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HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is crucial to growing up in the modern world. Without a decent education, children become adults with limited opportunities. In poor countries, improved education leads to faster and more sustainable economic and social development and contributes to the emergence of strong democratic institutions. In 1997, in recognition of education's importance to development, USAID elevated it to the status of an Agency goal: human capacity built through education and training.¹ The goal encompasses Agency objectives in *basic education* and *higher education*.

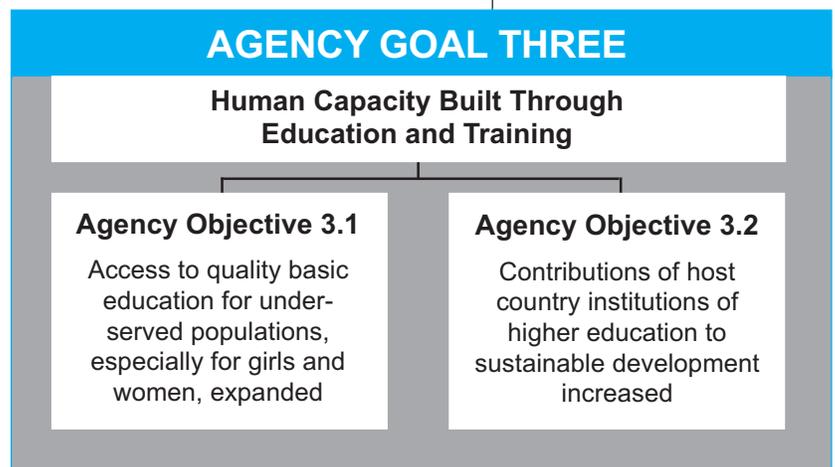
This chapter briefly examines the linkages between education and USAID's other goals and summarizes the Agency's approaches to improving basic and higher education. Section II identifies challenges to educational progress in different regions, reviews indicators of progress in educational development, and examines the performance of USAID education program efforts in 1997. Section III highlights representative USAID education programs. Finally, section IV summarizes the findings of an evaluation of recent USAID efforts to improve educational prospects of girls. The evaluation provides a wealth of evidence and analysis on the effectiveness of different approaches to improving girls' education, with strong implications for improving future USAID program efforts.

The Strategic Framework

• Basic Education

USAID works to *expand access to quality basic education for underserved populations, especially for girls and women* (objective 3.1). The Agency places special emphasis on expanding and improving primary education, while supporting preprimary and lower secondary education where conditions warrant. The objective also includes literacy programs for adults and out-of-school children.

Effective and widely accessible basic education contributes to sustainable development in several ways. First, a decent basic education provides students with core literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills. With these skills, students become more productive and adaptable once they enter the labor force, and, as a result, they earn more money. They also gain better access to higher paying jobs in emerging industries. Improved lifetime earnings represent the most tangible payoff to the investment governments and families make in education. In coun-



tries with appropriate economic policies, access to basic education contributes substantially to progress in reducing poverty, both by boosting economic growth and by ensuring that the benefits of growth are broadly shared. Public funding of basic education can help break the cycle of poverty by giving children of the poor access to the core skills they need to escape poverty. Partly for this reason, almost all governments accept responsibility—at least in principle—for providing all children access to basic education. Most choose to provide that education directly.

Basic education also leads to improved child care and reduced child mortality. Better educated parents do a better job of meeting the health and nutritional needs of their children and provide better support for their own children's education. As a result, basic education encourages a shift to healthier, better-educated families. Because women universally shoulder primary responsibility for raising children, most of these gains result from ensuring that more girls have access to an effective basic education.

Better and more accessible basic education for girls also helps reduce the high fertility rates found in many developing countries, ultimately slowing population growth. The links between girls' education and fertility are complex, but several factors deserve attention. First, because better educated mothers raise healthier children, more of them survive to adulthood. As a result, families no longer need extra children to ensure that enough will survive to care for their parents in old age. Second, basic education raises women's earning potential, making it more "expensive"

to devote their time to raising children. The tendency is for better educated women to marry later and to want fewer children. Third, education increases women's acceptance of and knowledge about modern contraceptive methods, which help them limit pregnancies to the smaller number they have come to desire.

Finally, the spread of literacy through basic education both encourages popular support for democracy and human rights and helps translate that support into reality, a point noted two centuries ago by Thomas Jefferson that is confirmed by recent cross-country statistical analysis.²

Most developing countries have made substantial progress in recent decades in raising primary and secondary school enrollment rates and achieving basic literacy. However, many have a long way to go to reach universal enrollment even at the primary level.³ Moreover, the poor quality of basic education in many developing countries reduces the benefits of attending school, contributing to high rates of grade repetition and school dropout. In most regions, limited access and poor quality affect girls more severely than boys, leading to significant gender gaps in primary and secondary enrollment and completion. Some of the reasons for this are discussed in section IV.

USAID programs in basic education seek to help countries overcome these problems and more fully realize the potential contribution of basic education. First, they help countries develop and adopt policies to make basic education more accessible and improve quality. Second, USAID helps countries build the institutional capacity to

manage their basic education systems more effectively. Third, USAID programs promote adoption of improved teaching methods and encourage use of improved educational materials and technologies, including distance education through radio and the Internet. The Agency also provides some direct teacher training. Finally, USAID programs promote increased and more effective community participation in educational decision-making.

In 1997, USAID allocated most of its human capacity development funding to basic education. The Agency provided \$127.9 million for basic education in three regions—Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Near East. Of that, \$122.8 million (96 percent) went to basic education for children. The remaining \$5.1 million supported adult literacy programs.⁴

• **Higher Education**

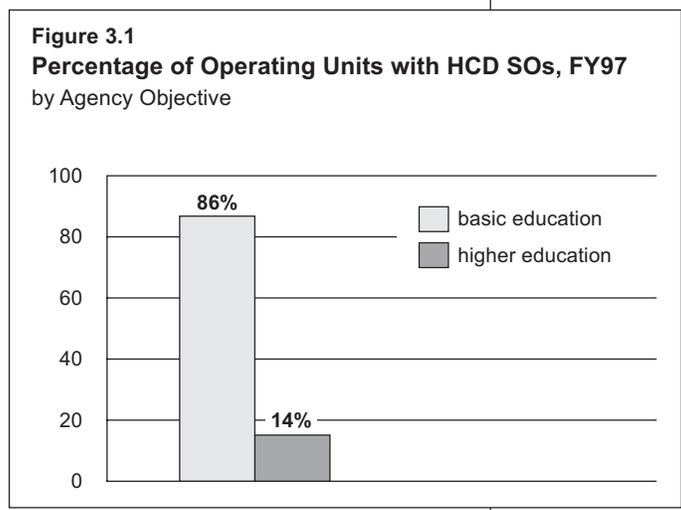
USAID works to *increase the contributions of host-country institutions of higher education to sustainable development* (objective 3.2). Colleges and universities in many developing and transitional countries are underperforming in their proper roles. They could increase their support in such areas as training the next generation of political and professional leaders, conducting research on scientific and social problems, and providing access to the world’s rapidly expanding store of scientific and technological knowledge. Increasingly, they are being called on to participate more actively in finding solutions to local and national problems, open their doors to the traditionally underserved, and improve systems of basic education. To support this transformation, USAID creates partnerships between host country colleges

and universities on the one hand, and local business, government, and the American higher education community on the other.

USAID applies a variety of cross-cutting development tools—including research, training, and efforts to improve host country policies and capacity in information technology—to advance all of its goals and strategic objectives, including basic and higher education.

Distribution of USAID Programming

In 1997, 27 USAID Missions and regional bureaus had at least one strategic objective under the human capacity development goal, for a total of 36. Figure 3.1 presents the distribution of strategic objectives. Of the total, 31, or 86 percent, supported expanded access to quality basic education. The remaining 5 (14 percent) supported improved performance of higher education. Annex A provides a detailed breakdown by geographic region and Agency objective.⁵



Strategic objectives involving basic education substantially outnumbered those aimed at strengthening higher education in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Near East. This reflects a judgment that the deficiencies of basic education present the most serious constraints to development in these regions. By contrast, basic education in Europe and the new independent states is much better developed. Programs in that region support no strategic objectives in basic education.

The Agency's six objectives supporting higher education include large bilateral programs in South Africa and in Egypt and a regional program in Latin America and the Caribbean. Each sought to improve the capacity and quality of local

institutions of higher education. The Bureau for Europe and the New Independent States had one strategic objective to support improvement of higher education in Hungary.

The number of strategic objectives in higher education understates USAID's involvement in higher education. Because higher education was just adopted as an Agency objective in 1997, activities involving higher education initiated earlier were reported under one of USAID's five goals existing at the time. The Bureau for Europe and the New Independent States, in particular, reported only one strategic objective in support of higher education, yet it uses partnerships with host country institutions of higher education as a major vehicle in its programs.

II. AGENCY PROGRESS UNDER HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE GOALS

Country Development Trends

Despite considerable diversity among countries, there are discernible patterns in the challenges education faces in the regions where USAID operates. In **Africa, Asia and the Near East, and Latin America and the Caribbean**, expanding access to and improving quality in basic education are the highest priorities.

In most countries in **Latin America and the Caribbean** almost all children receive at least some primary schooling. This does not hold true, however, for Haiti, the region's poorest country, or for rural areas of Guatemala, especially for Mayan children. But the quality of basic education in most countries is

poor, which means many children fail to master the basic language and math skills necessary to function effectively in modern society. Poor quality is largely responsible for the high dropout rates that plague most countries in the region.

In **Africa**, a few countries have high initial enrollment in primary school followed by high dropout rates. More typically, a substantial number or even a majority of children do not even begin school, usually because there is no local school or because the school is already overcrowded. Limited access to basic education is rooted in a variety of overlapping problems, including inadequate public funding of education overall and a tendency to spend a disproportionate share of the education

budget on higher education. In many countries, rapid population growth and slow economic growth have made it even harder to provide adequate funding for basic education. Per-pupil education spending dropped during the 1980s and early 1990s. Inadequate funding contributes to poor educational quality in most African countries. Teachers are untrained, supervision is weak, school buildings are inadequate, and textbooks and other teaching materials are in short supply. All these factors contribute to low rates of school completion, particularly among girls.

USAID-assisted countries in the **Asia and the Near East** region (which includes North Africa) span a wide range of economic, educational, and social development. The region includes several of the world's largest countries, some of which suffer large gaps between boys' and girls' access to basic education. USAID basic education programs there concentrate on boosting girls' access to quality basic education and on improving women's literacy.

Countries in the **Europe and the new independent states** region face different challenges. Primary and secondary enrollment rates are generally high, and problems of educational quality much less severe than in other regions. USAID believes the most promising opportunities lie in improving the contribution of the region's institutions of higher education to the emergence of strong market economies and democratic governance. USAID concentrates on strengthening linkages between higher education institutions in the United States and other advanced nations.

- **Progress Toward Full Primary Enrollment**

The United States is committed to the target of full primary enrollment by 2015 (Development Assistance Committee, *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation*). USAID tracks progress toward this target among the countries it assists. A country is considered “on track” if its net primary school enrollment ratio is increasing at a rate fast enough to reach full enrollment by 2015, *if that rate is sustained*. This measure provides a useful summary of recent enrollment growth in relation to the country's distance from the target. It is not a forecast of future enrollment growth.⁶ Data gaps required reliance on data for years not included in Annex C. To be included in the calculations, a country had to report the net primary enrollment ratio for at least one year from 1994 through 1996.⁷

Among the nine countries in **Africa** with USAID programs contributing to basic education in 1997, five—Benin, Ethiopia, Mali, Namibia, and South Africa—reported the data necessary to allow net primary enrollment growth to be calculated over roughly 10 years, ending in 1994–96. Of the five, Namibia and South Africa are on track toward full primary enrollment by 2015. A sixth country, Malawi, reported full primary enrollment in 1996. The three countries that did not report the necessary data were Ethiopia, Ghana, and Uganda.

Data problems were even more severe in the **Asia and Near East** region. Of five countries with basic education objectives—Cambodia, Egypt, India, Morocco, and Nepal—only Morocco

reported sufficient data to calculate net primary enrollment growth over the past decade. Those data showed Morocco to be on track toward full enrollment by 2015. In addition, Cambodia reported full primary enrollment in 1996.

In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, USAID supported basic education programs in 10 countries in 1997: Bolivia, Brazil, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Peru. Five—Brazil, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Peru—reported the data necessary to calculate primary enrollment growth over the past decade. The first three were increasing net enrollments fast enough to reach full enrollment by 2015. Nicaragua fell just short of the required growth rate. By contrast, Peru's net primary enrollment rate has fallen over the past decade, although there is some evidence of recovery since 1993.

Many countries in **Europe and the new independent states** do not report net enrollment rates. Among those that do, most have high rates of primary enrollment, though in some countries these have slipped in recent years. USAID does not provide direct support for basic education in this region.

- **Reducing the Gender Gap in Primary Enrollments**

USAID supports eliminating the difference between boys' and girls' enrollment rates at the primary level.⁸ To track progress toward this goal, USAID calculates a gender gap measure for each USAID-assisted country based on its gender equity ratio, the ratio of girls' to boys' *gross* primary enrollment rates.⁹ Gender gaps for individual countries are averaged across each region.

Figure 3.2 shows recent trends in the average gender gap among the countries that supported basic education programs in 1997. Although the regional averages conceal much country-level detail, they show a gradual narrowing of the gender gap in all three regions. Despite progress, however, the gender gap remains large in much of Africa and in many countries in Asia and the Near East. Section IV summarizes a recent evaluation of USAID's efforts to reduce barriers to education for girls and women.

Among the nine USAID basic education countries in the **Africa** region, the average gender gap declined markedly from 28.1 percent in 1986 to 23.5 percent in 1996. The gender gap declined in seven of the nine countries. It increased slightly in South Africa (0.3 percent to 1.7 percent) and sharply in Ethiopia (33.8 percent to 43 percent.)

The five USAID basic education countries in Asia and the Near East region also achieved a dramatic reduction in the primary school gender gap over the past decade. The regional average gap fell from 30.4 percent in 1986 to 20.8 percent in 1996. At the country level, the gender gap fell from 26 percent to 18 percent in India, from 35 percent to 24 percent in Morocco, and from 53 percent to 33 percent in Nepal. Despite this impressive progress, each of these countries still has a long way to go to reach gender equality. Progress has been slower in Cambodia and Egypt, though the gender gaps have been smaller there than in other countries in the region.

With the exception of Guatemala, gender gaps in primary enrollment rates are quite small among the nine countries with basic education objectives in **Latin America and the Caribbean**. It is harder to interpret the gender gap measure, however, because six of the countries register gross enrollments at or above 100 percent for boys and girls. This is a reflection of extensive grade repetition. Moreover, in four of those countries—Dominican Republic, Honduras, Jamaica, and Nicaragua—gender gap measures indicated higher gross primary enrollment rates for girls than for boys. Bearing this in mind, the regional gender gap fell from 6.2 percent to 4.5 percent from 1986 through 1996. The gap narrowed in seven of the nine USAID-assisted countries. Brazil and Jamaica registered small increases.

- **Supporting Higher Education Partnerships That Facilitate Enhanced Responsiveness**

USAID fosters partnerships between institutions of higher education in the United States and overseas in an effort

to enhance the relevance of the countries' colleges and universities to development needs. The focus is on developing faculty, student, and institutional linkages, which will promote changes in curricula, research, and campus-based community involvement, in response to local or national needs.

In **Egypt**, USAID-fostered partnerships helped Egyptian universities improve their research capacity. In **South Africa**, USAID provided grants to strengthen 15 historically disadvantaged institutions. USAID provided support to 9 institutions in **Albania, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia** to create or expand programs in management training and market economics education, and to 11 institutions in Russia and Ukraine to strengthen educational programs in areas such as economic restructuring, health, and the environment.

In addition, USAID's Center for Human Capacity Development has supported the University Development Linkages Project since 1992. The program is designed to enhance long-term, sustainable collaboration between American and developing-country colleges and universities. The aim is twofold: 1) helping higher education institutions in developing countries more effectively meet the development needs of their societies, and 2) enabling American colleges and universities to increase the international dimension of their programs—for example, by attracting more foreign students or making the curriculum global in perspective. In 1997 the linkages program supported the formation of 41 partnerships, including 4 historically black colleges and universities in the United States. The Highlights section provides more information on some of the results of these programs.

Performance indicators for USAID's higher education objective are under development.

Monitoring USAID Program Performance in Human Capacity Development

In addition to tracking country-level indicators, USAID closely monitors its operational-level performance.

- **Data for Performance Monitoring**

In 1997, both target and actual data for performance indicators were reported for 66 percent of the 36 strategic objectives in human capacity development. Since this is a new goal area this year, no comparable data are available for

1996. For those objectives for which indicator data were reported for 1997, performance met or exceeded targets in 84 percent of the cases and fell short in 16 percent of the cases.

At the intermediate results level, actual performance data against an established target were reported for 69 percent of the 139 intermediate results.

- **1997 Performance: Bureaus' Technical Performance Assessments**

Of 34 strategic objectives in support of the goal of human capacity development, technical reviews by the regional bureaus judged that 20 percent exceeded performance expectations, 74 percent met expectations, and 6 percent fell short of expectations in 1997.¹⁰

III. HIGHLIGHTS

The human capacity development highlights include several notable successes and one case where results were mixed. USAID aims to learn from experience and apply those lessons to improve future efforts.

Community Schools

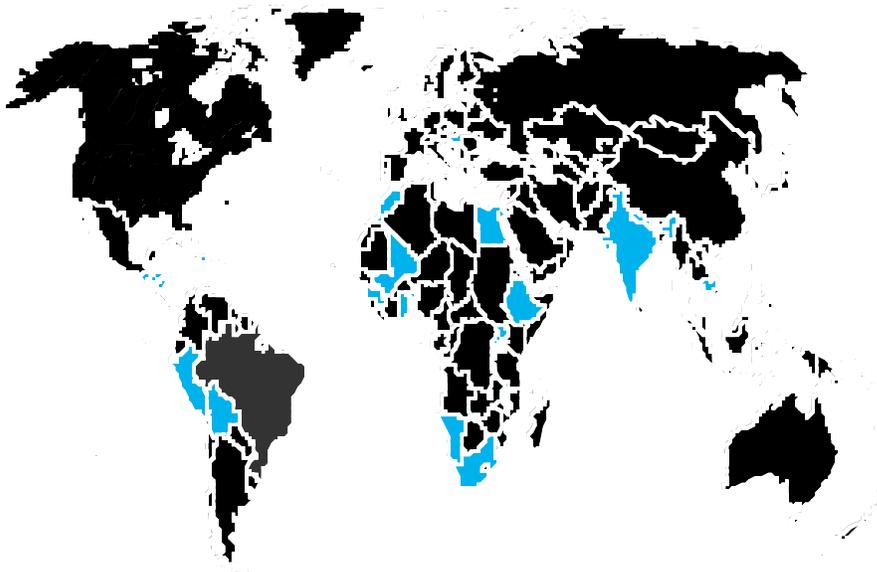
Throughout Africa, communities are increasingly involved in educational reform, particularly in school management. With USAID assistance, communities in **Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Malawi** have formed committees of parents, teachers, and community leaders to evaluate and address the development and maintenance needs of local schools.

A Community School Grants Program, established in the northern (Tigray) and

southern (Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples) provinces of **Ethiopia** is helping improve the classroom environment for children, especially girls. USAID-sponsored development agents work with local communities to help them draft action plans that prioritize the needs of local schools and outline a strategy for reaching their goals. USAID awarded community seed grants averaging about \$400—matched by community contributions, often as high as five times the initial grant—to fund activities ranging from the construction and repair of latrines and classrooms to the purchase of educational materials for students and teachers. Development agents encourage communities to discuss and rectify cultural barriers to girls' education, such as early marriages. One example of success: more than half the schools

MAP 3.1

Objective 3.1: Basic Education
Objective 3.2: Higher Education



Country Programs

Objective 3.1: Basic Education especially for Girls

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Benin | Honduras |
| Bolivia | India |
| Cambodia | Jamaica |
| Dominican Rep. | Malawi |
| Egypt | Mali |
| El Salvador | Morocco |
| Ethiopia | Namibia |
| Ghana | Nepal |
| Guatemala | Nicaragua |
| Guinea | Peru |
| Haiti | South Africa |
| | Uganda |

Objective 3.2: Higher Education

- Egypt
- Hungary
- South Africa

Regional Programs

African Sustainable Development
(Objective 6.1 only)

LAC Regional *(6.1 and 6.2)*

in the Tigray region have participated in the program since 1994, helping Tigray maintain primary enrollment ratios well above the national average (47 percent in Tigray, 31 percent nationwide).¹¹

With USAID sponsorship, a U.S. private voluntary organization actively promoted community–school partnerships in **Mali** and **Malawi**. The goal was to establish primary schools in remote areas where none existed. Teachers for these schools, unlike for traditional government schools, are selected by the community from among its own members and typically have no more than a primary school certificate. Teachers often give instruction in the local language and scale down and adapt the curriculum to local needs. Classes are smaller (restricted to 30 in Mali and 50 in Malawi).

Teachers receive substantial supervision and in-service training. Schools are provided with supplies and teaching and learning materials. The school calendar is adapted to local needs, and greater effort is made to promote community participation than is typical in government schools. In both countries, villagers have become responsible for school construction. In Mali, villagers must pay teachers’ salaries, too. Children in the targeted schools performed as well as or better in all subjects than children in government schools. Repetition and dropout rates in targeted schools were lower than in government schools, and promotion rates were higher.¹²

School management committees in Mali and Malawi have become actively involved in school affairs, frequently attending classes and holding meetings with teachers. By engaging communities in educational reform, USAID-supported programs help the school become a focal

In 1997, more than 100,000 Nepali women learned to read, write, and count in USAID-sponsored literacy classes.

point for social change, which contributes to the long-term prospects for sustainable, people-centered development.

Using Food Aid to Boost School Completion

In **Bolivia**, USAID's Food for Education Program (Public Law 480, Title II) supported a school feeding program designed to encourage poor rural families to keep their children in school rather than allowing them to drop out before graduation. Grade completion rates for boys and girls rose from 84 percent in 1996 to 89 percent in 1997 in USAID-targeted schools. For girls alone, the completion rate rose from 86 percent to 90 percent, while the dropout rate for both genders fell from 11 percent to 7 percent, well below the target of 9 percent in 1997.¹³

Increasing School Completion Through Improved Educational Quality

For many years, USAID has supported efforts by the Ministry of Education in **Honduras** to improve educational quality, including funding the development and adoption of improved textbooks and teacher training in improved teaching methods. These efforts contributed to a 280 percent increase in standardized test scores from 1990 through 1997. The improved quality of schooling in turn helped boost sixth-grade completion rates, which rose from 55 percent in 1986 to 73 percent in 1997. In both measures, the gains achieved by girls slightly exceeded those of boys.¹⁴

Increasing Mathematics Achievement

In **Jamaica**, the second phase of USAID's Primary Education Assistance Program supported teacher training and improvements in the primary mathematics curriculum and related teaching materials. The program helped train educational assessment coordinators for local primary schools and master math teachers, who provide ongoing support for other teachers. Although the program ended in 1996, the Jamaican government has continued to pursue these improvements using its own resources. Together, these efforts helped boost average performance of third-grade students on standardized math tests by 4 percent from 1996 through 1997, exceeding expectations and reversing a steady 10-year decline in national indicators of education performance.¹⁵

Increasing Women's Literacy

Basic education programs supported by the Bureau for **Asia and the Near East** concentrate on educating girls and illiterate women. In **Nepal**, USAID supported literacy programs for adult women and out-of-school adolescent girls implemented by local and international nongovernmental organizations. The programs helped raise the literacy rate among adult women in the targeted districts from less than 22 percent in 1991 to 28 percent in 1996. In 1997, more than 100,000 women learned to read, write, and count in USAID-sponsored literacy classes. An evaluation of these programs detected several changes in the behavior and attitudes of women who have become literate. These include greater political awareness, greater participation in groups

outside their families, increased control over income, greater influence in household decisions, more mobility, enhanced self-confidence, greater respect from family and community members, and increased ability to envision a different future for themselves and for their children.¹⁶

Expanding Basic Education Through Distance Learning

In **Honduras** the USAID-supported Education for All Program uses distance learning techniques to reduce educational inequities and improve incomes. The program helps out-of-school youth and adults complete their basic education, using radio or cassette instruction supported with texts and volunteer facilitators. Local municipalities and the private sector and municipalities have provided impressive support. For example, in 1997, 14 private sector employers started sponsoring Education for All programs in the workplace, providing class time, lesson facilitators, and tape players. Municipalities honored volunteer facilitators with certificates of recognition or monthly stipends. The program provided some 53,000 student-years of basic education in 1997. An evaluation concluded that students earned an extra \$40 a year for each year of the program completed, achieving a financial rate of return greater than 200 percent.¹⁷

Pitfalls on the Road to Universal Primary Education: Access Versus Quality

The recent experience of **Malawi** and **Uganda** illustrates the difficulty of achieving rapid increases in access to education while maintaining quality.

Following its rise to power in 1994, the new democratic government of **Malawi** decreed that primary schooling would be provided free to all children. Primary enrollments doubled almost overnight. Despite increased funding for education and other measures to support the new policy, pupil–teacher ratios shot up to 77 to 1, many classes had to be held under trees or in makeshift shelters, and students in lower grades were assigned the least qualified teachers. Educational quality dropped markedly and has only slowly begun to recover.

Uganda announced a similar policy in early 1997, with similar results. Gross primary enrollment rose from 68 percent in 1995 to 105 percent in 1997, with especially large increases in first- and second-grade enrollments. In many classrooms, the number of children increased from a manageable 40 to more than 80, putting a tremendous strain on teachers and facilities and limiting access to textbooks and other learning materials.

The experience of these two countries reveals the pent-up demand for education. Meeting this demand while maintaining or improving educational quality requires reallocation of government budgets, together with improvements in local capacity to manage the educational system. Neither of these adjustments can be done in a hurry. Rather than waiting until the volatile issue of universal education arrives on the political scene and then launching crash programs to respond to newly unleashed public demand, governments need to make systematic, determined efforts to ensure the enough funds are available to develop their own capacity to manage the educational system effectively.

In both countries, USAID education officers have worked with ministries of education to find the necessary financial and human resources to ensure that primary school students receive a quality education, rather than simply an enrollment opportunity. For example, in 1997 USAID/Uganda used \$10 million originally intended for nonproject assistance to purchase textbooks and building materials for primary schools. Through its Teacher Development and Management System project, USAID/Uganda also supported in-service and refresher training for 5,100 untrained teachers, 10,000 trained teachers, 350 teacher trainers, and 2,400 head teachers in 1997. This effort has helped meet the urgent need for trained and competent teachers and school managers to handle the expanded student population.¹⁸

American Schools and Hospitals Abroad

The American Schools and Hospitals Abroad program, managed by the Bureau for Humanitarian Response, provided grants to overseas secondary schools, colleges, and universities founded or sponsored by U.S. citizens. The schools serve as demonstration centers that promote U.S. ideas and practices. The grants supported improvements in facilities and equipment, including the adoption of state-of-the-art American technologies. For example, USAID funding led to the completion in 1997 of a women's dormitory at the Pan-American School of Agriculture in Honduras. The dormitory contributed to a 38 percent increase in female enrollment at the school.¹⁹

Making Research More Responsive

In **Egypt**, local demand for applied research carried out through USAID-funded linkages between U.S. and Egyptian universities translated into dollar support. Local users covered at least 40 percent of the cost of more than 96 percent of the grants, nearly double the share targeted. Cost sharing breaks with tradition for Egyptian universities. They have depended almost exclusively on government funding to support research. If cost-sharing spreads, it will enhance the flow of relevant research from the higher education community.²⁰

Advancing Human Rights

A partnership between Makerere University (**Uganda**) and the **University of Florida**, supported by the University Development Linkages project, established a Human Rights and Peace Center in Uganda. Center officials consult with governments and NGOs on such issues as civic education, constitutionalism, and human rights. The center has played a key role in advancing human rights initiatives in the Great Lakes region of East Africa, which has recently undergone turmoil and conflict. Students with the center have conducted civil rights training workshops for local NGOs and in such unlikely but practical places as jails.²¹

Improving Curriculum

Cooperation between Carnegie-Mellon University and the International Management Institute in **Ukraine** has helped strengthen faculty capabilities in areas such as executive education

and financial management strategy. Faculty have then provided consulting services to private businesses. The institute's reputation is so good, it now must turn away applicants, even with tuition costs of \$5,000 per year.²²

Supporting Sustainable Agriculture

A \$500,000 grant supported collaborative efforts between Clemson University and Bogor Agricultural University

in **Indonesia**, contributing to the development of an integrated pest management system to combat infestations of local shallot and cabbage crops. The new system reduced farmers' risk of pesticide poisoning as well as their production costs. If applied to all 14,000 hectares (35,000 acres) planted to these crops, the system is expected to yield \$80 million a year in net benefits through increased production and reduced pesticide costs, together with reduced pesticide poisoning and improved local water and food quality.²³

IV. EDUCATING GIRLS

The Problem

Many developing countries fail to ensure that girls have adequate access to basic education. These countries pay a high economic and social price for their neglect. Private and public investment in basic education generally offers high rates of return in developing countries by raising students' future productivity and earnings. The economic payoff to basic education tends to be especially high in countries where prevailing levels of education and literacy are low. Studies show that the earnings payoff to girls' and boys' education tends to be roughly equal on average.

However, educating girls provides substantial additional benefits to families and to society in general. These come in the form of improvements in child survival, family health, reductions in high rates of fertility, and support for the education of the next generation. When these nonmarket benefits are factored in, the evidence suggests that the social return from educating girls generally exceeds that from educating boys.²⁴

Unfortunately, many developing countries fail to realize the economic and social payoff from educating girls. In many regions, girls have less access to basic education than boys. The quality of education they receive often falls short as well, contributing to higher rates of grade repetition and dropout. Gender gaps in primary enrollment account for a large share of the overall shortfall from full enrollment in many countries. Even larger gaps show up in primary completion and advancement to secondary schooling. (Section II reviews regional trends in the gender gap in primary education.)

USAID's Role

For many years, USAID has provided strong leadership among donors to address the education of girls. USAID focused attention on girls' education issues at the 1990 Education for All Conference at Jomtien, Thailand. The conference has helped frame international discussion of basic education issues ever since. USAID leadership reflects years of active dialog with host

governments and other donors, together with recognized expertise gained from USAID's long-term field presence in developing countries and from the attention it has paid to girls' education issues in basic education projects in many host countries.

Improving educational opportunities for girls is at the core of USAID's overall objective in basic education. However, although there is universal agreement within USAID on the importance of girls' education *as a goal*, there is active debate about the most effective strategies and tactics for advancing this goal. Perspectives range from an emphasis on improvements in basic educational systems to expand educational opportunities for all children, including girls, to an equally strong emphasis on the need to remove specific barriers to girls' participation in education. The debate is mirrored in differences in the use of the term *girls' education*—to describe educational *outcomes*, such as changes in girls' enrollment or completion rates, or to describe USAID program *efforts* to achieve those outcomes. The differing perspectives raise problems with USAID's budgetary reporting: the reported \$192 million in spending on girls' education from 1990 through 1996 can be viewed as either a gross underestimate of what USAID spent on programs that have affected girls' educational outcomes, or a gross overestimate of the efforts specifically addressing girls' education issues.

The Evaluation

To help resolve these issues and to provide a better focal point for future programs, USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation conducted a major assessment of the

Agency's girls' education efforts. Focus on Girls: An Evaluation of USAID Programs and Policies in Education included field studies of USAID programs in Guatemala, Guinea, Malawi, Nepal, and Pakistan. In each country, USAID employed a different approach to improve girls' education, based in part on different country conditions. The evaluation also included three country desk studies (Bolivia, Egypt, and Thailand) and an extensive literature review. The results were synthesized in a publication entitled *More, But Not Yet Better: An Evaluation of USAID's Program and Policies to Improve Girls' Education*.²⁵

The evaluation sought answers to five questions about the effectiveness of different approaches to advancing girls' education:

- What are the best ways to get girls into schools?
- How can the quality of girls' education be improved?
- What are the best ways to help girls complete a basic education?
- What is the impact on boys of efforts to improve girls' education?
- What are the critical features of approaches that lead to sustainable improvements in education for girls?

The evaluation results provide insights into a wide range of issues central to the design of future efforts—by USAID, other donors, and host country governments—to improve educational outcomes for girls.

The sections that follow summarize findings from field studies in four countries and highlight lessons learned.²⁶

Case Studies

• Pakistan

In 1989, USAID/Pakistan launched the Primary Education Development project, a 10-year, \$280 million program. The goal was to help Balochistan and North-West Frontier Provinces build the capacity to deliver primary education and to adopt policy reforms to improve access, equity, and quality at the primary school level, especially for rural girls.²⁷ When the project began, the educational and health status of women in the two targeted provinces was among the worst in the world. For example, the literacy rate among women in the two provinces was only 1.8 percent and 3.8 percent, respectively. In accordance with local custom, girls and boys attended separate schools run by separate male and female administrations. When the project began, 14 percent of girls and 70 percent of boys in Balochistan were enrolled in school; in North-West Frontier Province, enrollment was 28 percent for girls and 79 percent for boys.²⁸

The project achieved a rapid increase in girls' access to primary education, based on a supply-side strategy of opening more schools for girls near their homes and staffing those schools with trained local female teachers. The project funded the creation of Directorates of Primary Education, charged with managing and improving primary schools—those most relevant to rural girls. The project ended halfway through its intended lifetime, when the United States suspended foreign aid to Pakistan in 1994. Only \$78 million of the planned \$280 million was actually spent. However, girls' access continues to be greater, and other donors have provided additional funding for efforts begun under the project.

By the time USAID stopped funding the project, the Directorates of Primary Education had taken strong root and were beginning to function as the project intended. School construction absorbed 80 percent of the funds provided, but a government commitment to build three girls' schools for every two built for boys was not met. Instead, only one sixth of the new schools built in Balochistan and two fifths of those in North-West Frontier Province were for girls.

Nevertheless, even this minimal degree of compliance with project conditions produced a major improvement in educational access for local girls: with 2,100 new girls' schools, girls' primary enrollments had increased 30 percent in Balochistan and 79 percent in North-West Frontier Province by 1994. Boys' enrollment increased over the same five-year period, by 13 percent and 9 percent, respectively. The project also helped dramatically expand the number of female teachers, by more than one third in Balochistan. Progress continued after other donors adopted the project: by 1996, seven years after the USAID project began, girls' enrollments had more than tripled in Balochistan and more than doubled in North-West Frontier Province.

• Guatemala

With an average income of \$1,470 in 1996, Guatemala is classified by the World Bank as a middle-income country. However, the distribution of income and wealth is highly skewed, with widespread poverty and malnutrition among the indigenous Mayans, who make up 50 to 60 percent of the

The Pakistan project achieved a rapid increase in girls' access to primary education, opening more schools for girls near their homes and staffing those schools with trained local female teachers.

population. A long, brutal civil war, which ended in 1996, caused many deaths and widespread destitution among the rural Mayans. Guatemala's educational system has reinforced the pattern of inequality in the country: rural schools are few in number and generally ill-equipped. Many of the teachers in rural schools are poorly trained, poorly motivated, and insensitive to students' ethnicity and gender.

Rural girls—mostly Mayans—bear the brunt of the system's inadequacies: only 59 percent of rural girls were enrolled in primary school in the mid-1990s. Rural Mayan girls drop out of school at a much higher rate than boys, diverted by household chores, agricultural labor, and the lower traditional expectations of girls. Mayan women average 0.9 years of schooling, compared with 4 years for nonindigenous women.²⁹

To help address Guatemala's educational problems, USAID authorized the 10-year, \$30 million Basic Education Strengthening project in mid-1989. As initially designed, the project included a large number of components. These included support for expanded bilingual education, in-service training and other support services for teachers, and research and development on alternative instructional approaches, including radio math and Spanish, achievement testing, and the New Unitary School model. The model proposed under this project uses flexible individual and group study and active participation to improve learning. USAID supported these and most other project components on a pilot scale. Two additional components addressed systemwide issues: a management information system for the Ministry of Education, and technical assistance to

the ministry on policy issues affecting basic education. For its part, the Guatemalan government agreed to hire technical staff and to provide funding to expand the project. Most important, the government agreed to nearly double its funding for basic education.

In 1991, USAID added a further component, the Girls' Education Program, to focus specifically on the educational problems of indigenous girls. The Girls' Education Program included three elements. The Girls' Education Initiative sought to engage leading business firms and several business-funded foundations in managing and funding girls' education activities. Educate the Girl was a three-year pilot project to evaluate the impact of different interventions—scholarships, creation of parents' committees supported by social promoters, and the distribution of motivational materials to teachers—on educational persistence and achievement among Mayan girls. Finally, the Integrated Curriculum was intended to train Ministry of Education staff in gender issues and to develop programs and materials for integrating attitudes, concepts, and methods to improve girls' attendance and retention in primary schools throughout Guatemala.

A midterm evaluation of the Basic Education Strengthening project led to the elimination of many of its components. The redesigned project, launched in 1993, retained the Girls' Education Program, technical assistance for policy reform, the management information system, and further pilot work on bilingual education and the New Unitary School model. The government agreed to provide more counterpart funds for the project and to progressively take over its full recurrent costs.

The evaluation attributes several successes to the Girls' Education Program component. The program gave national visibility to pressing issues of basic education for girls. It also promoted an interest in girls' education among some leading business firms and other private groups, resulting in a year-long awareness campaign on the importance of girls' school attendance. One of its pilot projects demonstrated the effectiveness of scholarships for rural girls in increasing their school attendance, which led the government to develop its own scholarship program for rural girls. The program also produced more gender-friendly teaching materials. Finally, it contributed to modestly increased allocations for primary and rural education in the national education budget.

However, the evaluation identified several factors that together undermined the impact of the Girls' Education Program. First, the program was not able to induce substantial, systemwide change in the Ministry of Education. The ministry made little effort to integrate more gender-sensitive teacher training and curriculum into its plans, or to meet its broader commitment to provide expanded fiscal and personnel support for primary education. Lack of ministry commitment to basic education reform contributed to USAID's early abandonment of plans to introduce the Integrated Curriculum, the main systemwide element in the program.

Second, the evaluation found the attention paid by business and political leaders to girls' education issues less vigorous and sustained than hoped for. It concluded that, in the effort to promote girls' education, insufficient efforts were made to include other elements of civil society—particularly education for women, Mayans, and

community groups. The evaluation pointed to the need for broader and deeper participation in the process of improving education for girls.³⁰

Regarding the broader Basic Education Strengthening project, the evaluation faults the Guatemalan government for largely failing to do its part to achieve the desired educational improvements. The evaluation states that the government provided neither the counterpart funding nor the technical staff needed to institutionalize project activities. In addition, political shifts led the government to drop its commitment to provide funding to expand the New Unitary School model beyond the pilot stage, despite evidence of the model's effectiveness in improving educational retention for both boys and girls. More generally, the evaluation suggests that both the Basic Education Strengthening project and its Girls' Education Program component devoted too much of their funding and attention to pilot projects, rather than to systemwide policy reforms and institutional changes with the potential to achieve large-scale, sustainable impact.

In retrospect, it appears that the evaluation was conducted at a low point in the girls' education initiative. Since its completion, several actions have been taken to improve girls' education in Guatemala. The government has proposed expanding its scholarship program for rural girls to 60,000 in 1999. It issued textbooks, cleansed of gender stereotypes, free to all primary schools. The government transferred responsibility for some administrative functions to outside groups. Private sector firms and foundations participated in writing the government's five-year plan for girls' education. Other donors improved their support for girls' education issues.

USAID/Guatemala is now more fully engaging women's and Mayan groups in the initiative. Finally, the government has increased its allocations for primary and rural education in the national education budget, although much less than it agreed under the Basic Education Strengthening project.

The impact of these developments on enrollment and completion among girls in rural Guatemala, as well as the degree to which they have resulted from USAID's efforts under Basic Education Strengthening and the Girls' Education Program, remain unresolved. However, USAID/Guatemala is using the results of the evaluation to enrich the design and implementation of its current education programs, which include further efforts to address the constraints to girls' educational participation and to expand and improve bilingual education in rural areas.

- **Malawi**

Malawi is one of the poorest countries of the world, with an average per capita income of \$180 in 1996. It has high rates of infant and child mortality and high fertility rates. More than 90 percent of the labor force works in agriculture. After 30 years of one-man rule, Malawi held its first democratic elections in 1994. The transition to a democratic society brought with it dramatic changes in economic, political, and social relations.

Before that, the government limited access to all levels of education and tightly controlled progression to the secondary and university levels, which absorbed a large share of public education funding. The net enrollment rate was 60 percent at the primary level and 4 percent at the secondary level. The

transition to democracy produced major changes in the educational system.

USAID launched the Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education project in 1991. The project emphasized girls' participation in schooling as part of a broader effort to improve efficiency and quality in Malawi's primary education system. A major goal was to help reduce fertility, because educated girls have fewer children. The project provided \$14 million in cash grants, plus \$6 million to fund specific project activities and secure technical expertise. The project included a program to waive school fees for girls who continued to progress through school rather than repeat grades, and a social mobilization campaign to encourage parents and community leaders to send girls to school.

The project contributed to increasing girls' enrollments and persistence at the primary school level. Between the 1990–91 and 1995–96 school years, primary school enrollments for both sexes more than doubled, while the share of girls in overall primary enrollments increased from 45 percent to 47 percent, which is close to the 50 percent needed to achieve equal access for boys and girls. Moreover, the social mobilization campaign appears to have been successful in its efforts to improve social attitudes about the importance of schooling for girls.

However, the fee waiver program for girls created under the project also seems to have contributed to political pressures on the new democratic government to eliminate school fees for *all* primary school children. The incoming president announced universal, free primary education in his inauguration speech, resulting in the explosive in-

crease in primary school enrollments described earlier. The attempt to introduce universal primary education overnight has raised quality problems that could threaten the sustainability of educational progress.

- **Guinea**

Guinea, located on Africa's west coast, had a per capita income of \$590 in 1996. Infant and maternal mortality rates are high, and other indicators of economic and social development are weak. Despite its small size, the country has great ethnic and economic diversity. Literacy among women 15 or older is estimated at only 22 percent, compared with 50 percent for men.³¹

Guinea launched an economic reform program in 1986 that is ongoing, with strong support from the donor community. To complement Guinea's economic reforms, USAID and other donors supported the Program for Structural Adjustment in Education, beginning in 1990. USAID provided \$39.8 million in budget support, of the estimated \$205 million the program cost. When the program began, the gross primary enrollment rate was 50 percent for boys and 24 percent for girls. With high rates of dropout and repetition, only half the children entering first grade reached the sixth grade, and only 10 percent reached sixth grade without repeating at least one grade.

To help address these problems, USAID linked the release of program funds to a set of conditions the government had to meet. Those included increasing the share of education in the overall budget, increasing the share of spending on primary schooling in the education budget, and increasing the share of funds devoted to materials,

textbooks, and other nonsalary items. The Agency required that girls' share of primary enrollments not fall below 33 percent of the total. In the process of meeting these conditions, Guinea reassigned more than 2,500 administrators and secondary school teachers to teach at the primary level. The reform program harnessed community contributions to help with the construction and maintenance of schools, teacher food allowances, and student materials. By the end of the program in 1996, the gross enrollment rate at the primary level had risen to 65 percent for boys and 35 percent for girls.

Lessons Learned

The evaluation shed light on each of the five central questions it explored.

- **Increasing Girls' Enrollment**

The evaluation points to the need for *more and better primary schools* available to girls as a fundamental requirement for raising low enrollment rates among girls. Each element in this phase includes both general and gender-specific dimensions. Girls benefit from *more* primary schools in several ways. First, where cultural factors require separate schools for girls and boys, a lack of available places in girls' schools directly limits girls' initial enrollment. Second, where girls and boys attend the same schools, extreme overcrowding and other symptoms of resource scarcity create pressures to keep additional children out. While this affects both sexes, girls are disproportionately affected. Third, where there are too few primary schools or they are poorly located, girls must travel farther to get to school, which exposes them to the risk of sexual abuse or other dangers

on the way. These conditions make parents reluctant to allow their daughters to go to school in the first place.

Girls' enrollment also responds to the *quality* of primary schooling. Parents are less motivated to send their children to school or keep them there if schools fail to deliver basic literacy, numeracy, and other qualities and skills parents value. Since parents often view education as less valuable for girls, and their work in the home is important, parents are less likely to enroll daughters than sons if school quality is poor. In other words, girls' enrollments tend to be especially sensitive to parents' perceptions of poor quality.³² Quality also has gender-specific dimensions. Removing gender stereotypes from textbooks and curricula can help raise educational quality for girls.

The emphasis on *primary* schools is important because this is the level most directly relevant to girls in countries with low enrollment rates. Girls who fail to enroll at the primary level cannot enroll at the secondary or higher levels. As long as primary completion rates for girls remain lower than those for boys, simply improving the performance of higher levels of schooling will have less impact on girls.

For USAID, these findings imply that achieving gains in girls' participation in basic education depends heavily on Missions' success in motivating governments to take steps to increase access and improve quality at the primary level. For many countries, this means increasing both overall funding for education as well as the share of the education budget going to primary schools. They also need to undertake measures to improve teaching methods

and the management of schools and overall educational systems.

Removal of specific barriers to girls' participation can also play a crucial role in boosting their enrollment. For example, in systems with separate schools for boys and girls, female teachers and administrators are indispensable to operate girls' schools. More generally, female teachers help allay parents' (often well-justified) concerns about male teachers harassing or abusing their daughters. Disciplinary policies for teachers who have abused students can play an important role as well.

In addition, the evaluation finds that in the countries examined, the direct and indirect costs of schooling are a greater barrier for girls than for boys enrolling and staying in school. Together with the evidence that basic education for girls offers higher social returns than for boys, this justifies government efforts to reduce the cost of girls' schooling, either by reducing school fees or by offering scholarships or other subsidies.

The experience of Guatemala, Malawi, and Uganda confirms that reducing the cost to families of sending girls to school can be effective in increasing their school enrollment and keeping them from dropping out. However, the experience of these countries also highlights the strain on public resources involved in large-scale measures to reduce the costs of educating girls, as well as the political difficulties of keeping such measures targeted on girls. Unless governments find new, sustainable sources of revenue to fund such measures, they are likely either to operate only on a token scale, or cause a deterioration in educational quality for all children. Careful targeting can help limit the budgetary impact of cost-reduction measures.

- **Increasing Girls' Completion Rates**

The evaluation shows that educational quality is also critical for increasing the percentage of girls who actually complete their primary education. This is true for boys as well, but parents seem to be quicker to withdraw their girls from school at the first perceived sign of educational failure. Many girls fall victim to such perceptions of failure in the very early grades, especially children from poor and illiterate households, who fail to surmount the barriers posed by the demands of national curricula. For those who stay, poor educational quality contributes to high rates of grade repetition. Repetition also means that more girls approach or reach puberty while still in primary school, which creates concerns that they will face sexual harassment by teachers or male students.

The evaluation identifies the cost to families of girls' schooling as a second major cause of early dropout. Both the direct and indirect costs to the family of keeping girls in school increase as they get older: the direct costs because parents must usually pay for more expensive books, uniforms, and other items for older girls; the indirect costs because of the increasing value of girls' time in performing household chores or jobs outside the home. The evaluation points to targeted fee waivers or subsidies as promising remedies, as long as the government is able and willing to fund them on a sustainable basis.

Additional barriers to girls' school completion include 1) the use of inappropriate testing procedures, especially where tests are used to winnow out a certain proportion of children to limit advancement to a higher grade or to secondary school, rather than to verify

that children have mastered a body of knowledge and skills; and 2) policies that force pregnant girls to withdraw from school. These affect many girls in countries where early marriage is the norm. USAID has actively promoted changes in such policies.

- **Impact on Boys of Improvements in Girls' Education**

In all countries examined, successful efforts to improve girls' educational participation helped boys as well. In Guinea, where the interventions were not gender targeted, boys' enrollments rose more than girls' in absolute terms, though the gender equity ratio improved. In Pakistan the provincial governments failed to target a larger proportion of school construction resources to girls. That contributed to greater absolute gains for boys, though girls' participation improved dramatically. In Malawi, the government's decision to extend free schooling to all meant that this originally girl-targeted measure improved access but compromised quality for both boys and girls. Finally, the New Unitary School model, applied on a pilot basis in Guatemala, provided an improved learning environment for boys and girls in the few schools where it was applied.

Even some of the strictly gender-targeted interventions turned out to benefit boys, sometimes in unexpected ways. The clearest example was found in Pakistan, where many parents chose to send their boys to new girls' schools, apparently because the female teachers in those schools were less likely to subject their students to the severe corporal punishment that male teachers

More and better primary schools available to girls are fundamental requirements for raising low enrollment rates among girls.

use in boys' schools. More broadly, efforts to improve the gender sensitivity of textbooks and other materials provide an opportunity to improve educational quality for all.

The evaluation suggests that *effective* efforts to improve schooling for girls will benefit boys as well, because to be successful, programs must tackle the overall inadequacies of the basic education system, inadequacies that constrain both boys and girls. Good intentions are not enough. Efforts directly targeting girls must be embedded in effective strategies to address the systemic educational problems.

• **Improving Educational Quality**

Donor efforts to improve educational quality are complicated by the fact that different stakeholders—parents, host governments, and donors—tend to have different notions of what “quality” means. Most poor countries provide too little funding for primary education, and spend too large a share of those funds on teacher salaries, rather than on textbooks and other learning materials. Teachers tend to rely too heavily on teaching methods that demand passive memorization by students, rather than active participation. Many countries' systems are geared toward the educational needs of the children of better-off urban families, while failing to respond to less-prepared-to-learn children of the poor and illiterate. The net result is that many children encounter educational failure in the earliest grades, are forced to repeat, and eventually drop out.

Several additional aspects of quality are more specific to girls. First, the sex of the teacher can make a significant difference. In countries with single-sex

schools, female teachers are indispensable for schooling girls. More broadly, female teachers tend to pose less of a threat of sexual abuse to girls and may be a stronger role model for them.

Revising textbooks and other educational materials to put girls and women in a favorable light and to remove the implication that they fill only subordinate roles in society can also help give girls a sense that their education will prove helpful in later life.

Most recently, USAID has begun placing increased emphasis on measures to decentralize control over basic education, in part to give local communities a stronger voice and greater control within the educational systems that deliver basic education to their children. This approach holds great promise in raising the quality of basic education, at least in terms of attuning it more closely to local needs. The impact of decentralization on educational quality as viewed by donors is less certain.

The findings presented in this chapter confirm the need for countries and donors to make serious and sustained efforts to improve educational quality. Promising efforts include shifting to more realistic curricular goals, using active teaching methods, introducing programs to increase children's initial readiness for school, placing greater reliance on female teachers, and taking vigorous steps to combat sexual harassment. USAID continues the heavy emphasis it has placed for years on identifying cost-effective measures to improve educational quality and on persuading governments to adopt them.

USAID and other donors can encourage governments to take steps to improve educational quality in these and

other ways. Unfortunately, the subtle and multidimensional nature of educational quality tends to restrict attention to the quantity and use of inputs, which are more easily observable than educational processes or learning outcomes. Indeed, the evaluation identified few efforts to tackle the broader dimensions of educational quality. Serious challenges include helping governments identify constraints to educational quality, including unrealistic expectations of early learning by poorly prepared children, outdated teaching methods, the inappropriate use of tests, and poor teacher motivation linked to poor incentive structures and systems of educational management. Persuading governments to take effective action to address these constraints can be very difficult. The title of the evaluation synthesis—*More, But Not Yet Better*—points to improved quality as the yet-unrealized key to improvements in educational participation for girls.

- **Achieving Sustainable Improvements**

Even the most promising donor initiatives in basic education will fail to make a large-scale and lasting difference unless the host country chooses to apply and sustain them as part of normal practice. The nature of educational development makes sustainability critical. For example, the finding that female teachers strongly benefit girls' educational participation is of limited use as long as few girls complete primary school and acquire the minimal capabilities to educate others.

The evaluation points to several conclusions about the sustainability of measures to improve educational access and quality for girls:

1. Governments need to understand at the outset that improving educational outcomes for girls will require substantial and often fundamental changes, including additional resources for primary schools and changes in the way the educational system is managed. USAID Missions must ensure that host country governments are fully committed to making and sustaining these changes. The Guatemala experience suggests that government desire to start with pilot programs should be taken as a warning sign that it may not have the commitment needed to scale up even the most successful of those pilots to a national level. Experience in Malawi and Uganda indicates that efforts to increase girls' participation without ensuring the availability of the classrooms and teachers to handle the resulting increase in demand can compromise quality and undermine sustainability, or create cynicism about the whole notion of education for all. USAID Missions can contribute to the growth of host country commitment by encouraging recognition of the advantages of shifting from an educational system based on selectivity to one that emphasizes inclusion. They can also work to build a shared vision of what is needed to accomplish that shift.

2. Bottom-up participation in and demand for expanded and improved basic education is just as important as developing commitment at the top. The engagement of NGOs and of communities has made the demand for girls' education visible, helped demonstrate that obstacles to girls' participation can be addressed successfully, and created a groundswell of support for basic education for all. The increasing involvement of communities in financing and managing basic education holds the promise

of local investments of time, ingenuity, skills, and money to complement and leverage national public sector investments. Decentralization also helps ensure that the education delivered in the local classroom fits the perceived needs of parents, rather than simply those of Ministry of Education officials in the capital. The evaluation concludes that

USAID can sustain its leadership role in donor coordination by focusing on the cost-effectiveness of donor investments for quality. If such efforts succeed, girls and boys will sustain the educational gains they have made during the past decade.³³

3. Another priority for enhancing the sustainability of educational improvements for girls is the need to undertake growth-friendly improvements in overall economic policies to complement sectoral improvements in education. On the one hand, improved and expanded basic education helps fuel economic growth by providing new members of the labor force—both male and female—with adequate basic skills. On the other hand, strong, sustained, and

equitable growth supports further improvements in basic education, both by providing the budgetary resources needed for additional investment in education, and by ensuring a growing demand for workers with basic skills from new and growing industries. The strong and relatively equitable growth record of countries in East Asia clearly demonstrates the importance of this “virtuous circle” between growth and education.³⁴

The findings of the USAID evaluation effort Focus on Girls have already helped change USAID’s thinking about girls’ education. Recent changes in the Agency Strategic Plan produced tighter integration between the goal of improved basic education for girls and the policy and program approaches USAID uses to advance this goal. The Agency plans to revise its operational guidance on basic education to incorporate the findings of the evaluation. These actions, together with the direct impact of the evaluation on the thinking of USAID education officers, are expected to result in lasting improvements in the way the Agency addresses the critical problems of girls’ educational participation and achievement.

V. CONCLUSION

USAID’s programs in basic and higher education address two very different aspects of the challenge of development. Basic education programs help partner countries move toward the goal of universal access to quality primary education. Progress in this arena allows a growing share of the population to contribute more strongly to the process of growth and development, and ensures that the benefits of development are broadly shared. The benefits of

basic education take many forms, including a more productive and adaptable workforce, improved family health and increased child survival, reduced fertility, and increased support for democracy. In many partner countries, particular groups—especially women—have historically suffered limited access to basic education. USAID devotes particular attention to removing barriers to the educational participation of such underserved groups.